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ABSTRACT

The aim of this handbook is to help school improvement groups, parent advisory committees, administrators, and teachers plan for parent participation in their schools. The handbook contains information on the reasons for parent involvement and ideas and strategies various communities have used. Section I provides background information on parent participation. Section II presents ideas for parental involvement. Section III outlines the ways to develop a plan for parent involvement. Attachments include a checklist for parental involvement, a parent survey, a survey instrument for rating schools, a teacher survey, a parent interest survey, a home-school relations planner, a list of 10 ways to make a school "parent proof," references, and a bibliography. (RH)

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PARENT PARTICIPATION FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

"Planning for Parent Involvement"

A Handbook for Administrators, Teachers, and Parents

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September 1989

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INTRODUCTION

Why is parent involvement needed in schools?

A strong partnership between the home and school is needed if quality education is to be provided to all children. Parents and teachers, by working together, can reinforce each other's efforts. Without this cooperation, neither the parent nor the teacher can be fully effective. The parent is the child's first and most enduring teacher. The school needs to build upon that role.

New approaches are needed to getting parents involved in the school. Changes in family structure and lifestyle mean the strategies of yesteryear are not likely to be successful. A variety of opportunities to be involved with their child's education needs to be provided for parents. Schools also need to help parents recognize that they have an ongoing responsibility to be concerned about the quality of their child's education.

This handbook will help school improvement groups, parent advisory committees, administrators, and teachers plan for parent involvement in their school. It contains information on the whys of parent involvement, ideas and strategies various communities have used, and steps for planning for parent involvement. This handbook is one part of "Parent Participation for Effective Schools Program" developed by the Arizona Department of Education. Two additional handbooks, distributed during seminars on Parent Participation, are How to Help Your Child Learn (for parents) and Parent-Teacher Communication (for parents and teachers).

For information about the handbooks and/or seminars, contact:

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SECTION I

Background Information

on

Parent Involvement

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?

Research on parent involvement in education during the past 20 years has consistently identified two major benefits of positive parent participation:

- student achievement scores go up; and
- support for the school increases.

According to Anne Henderson, ". . . the evidence is beyond dispute: parent involvement improves student achievement. When parents are involved, children do better in school, and they go to better schools.

"Programs designed with strong parent involvement produce students who perform better than otherwise identical programs that do not involve parents as thoroughly, or that do not involve them at all. Schools that relate well to their communities have student bodies that outperform other schools. Children, whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with the school, score higher than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved. Schools where children are failing improve dramatically when parents are called in to help.

". . . children, whose background places them 'at risk' of failing or falling far behind, will outperform their friends for years if their parents are given training in home teaching techniques. Older children, whose progress starts to wobble, can be straightened out by home reinforcement techniques, where parents reward good performance.' (Henderson, 1987)

"The evidence is clear that students gain in personal and academic development if their families emphasize schooling, let the children know they do, and do so continually over the school years." (Epstein, December 5,1986)

"The most successful students are those whose parents become actively engaged in the educational process, . . . at home, but . . . at school as well." (Williams, 1986)

"Schools which are 'open' to their communities, and which have high levels of community support have students who are more proficient in reading and math." (Henderson, 1982)
"A recent report on 22 Milwaukee area school districts found that higher performing schools have considerably greater parent involvement." (Henderson, 1987)
"Twenty-eight parent involvement programs in 24 large American cities reported reduced absenteeism, higher achievement scores, improved student behavior, and restored confidence and participation among parents." (Moles, 1982)

Effective parent involvement programs are built on the following assumptions:

1. The primary educational environment comes from the family.

2. Parent involvement in a child's education is a major factor improving school effectiveness, the quality of education, and a child's academic success.

3. "The benefits are not confined to early childhood or the elementary level; there are strong effects from involving parents continuously throughout high school."

4. Low-income and minority children have the most to gain when schools involve parents. Parents do not have to be well-educated to help. (Chavkin, 1985; Henderson, 1987)

The following recommendations should be considered in planning for parent involvement:

1. The attitudes of teachers and administrators are critical to the development of effective parent involvement programs and activities. Training about parent involvement for both preservice and in-service educators is essential.

2. Parent involvement is a developmental process that must evolve over time. It should be comprehensive, long-lasting, and well-planned. Some parents will start with traditional kinds of involvement and move into more sophisticated roles over time.

3. It is critical that educators ask parents how they want to be involved in their children's education. Parents have a range of interests and skills, and may be more sophisticated than educators perceive them to be.

4. In each building, school, and district, educators, parents, and community members need to meet to clearly define parent involvement and to develop consensual, written parent involvement policies. These statements must be shared with everyone involved. The roles of parents and the procedures for their implementation must be defined.

5. School districts need to provide trained staff space and financial resources for parent involvement program implementation.

6. Administrators, principals, and teachers need to involve parents in both traditional and nontraditional ways. Parents are interested in all forms and levels of parent participation. A variety of involvement opportunities need to be available to accommodate varying skills, interests, available time, and work schedules of the parents.

7. Administrators, principals, and teachers need to work with parents to reduce barriers to open communications and to expand the opportunities for partnerships to benefit children's learning. (Chavkin, 1985)

GOALS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- o Increased awareness and understanding of school matters by residents.
- o Increased public involvement in educational decision making.
- o Increased support for schools.
- o Increased public ownership of schools.
- o Improved student achievement.
- o Improved staff morale.
- o Improved school-home-community relations. ("Citizen Involvement")

BENEFITS OF PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

To the students:

1. Increases student achievement.
2. Sees that education is important to the parent, therefore, values it more.
3. Receives additional evidence of their parent's interest in them which builds self-esteem.
4. Receives more individual, one-on-one attention because there are more adults in classroom.
5. Closer rapport is developed among student, teacher, and parents.
6. Improves behavior.
7. Makes school work more interesting so students want to learn.
8. Increased understanding of student's needs, abilities, and interests by the teacher.
9. Brings additional resources to the classroom which provide concrete, firsthand illustrations and demonstrations to clarify teaching.
10. Gives what goes on in school a closer relationship to life situations, needs, and problems.

To the teachers:

1. Learn about community resources and agencies.
2. Make use of resources which offer services or materials free of charge, or inexpensive.
3. Identify new ideas for presenting subject matter.
4. Provide additional information about each child; get another perspective on the child.
5. Draw upon supplemental and unique adult resources. For example, parents provide additional drill on skills in which the child is weak.
6. Increase understanding of community served by the school.
7. Gain a broader base of support for the school, because of increased understanding by parents and community members.
8. Improve morale when citizens get involved in schools.
9. Helps open communication channels between parents and teachers; clears up misunderstandings.
10. Provides additional adult role models in the classroom.

To parents and community:

1. Feel more comfortable in their local schools.
2. More supportive of decisions, because they helped to make them.
3. Become acquainted with goals and aims of the school.
4. Reinforce what is being taught in the school.
5. Encourage parents to be partners with teachers in the education of the child.
6. Increase feelings of self-worth and confidence through the contribution they are making.
7. Obtain a more well-rounded view of the child.
8. See the process (methods) used by the teacher; gains insight into what is actually happening in classroom.
9. Understand expectations of the school relative to the child's learning.
10. May develop more consistency in discipline of the child (Hager-Schoeny, 1977).

TYPES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents can be involved in their child's education in many ways. These can be grouped into various categories such as:

"Home-school communications involves the exchange of information between parent, teacher, and school which help both school and family to assist the child in learning. This exchange of information needs to be done in a variety of ways to increase the opportunity for understanding. Good communications serve as the foundation for all other home-school partnership activities.

Parents as Supporters represents the traditional role that many parents have played such as raising funds for the school, attending open house or student performances, chaperoning field trips, conducting campus clean-ups or organizing a book fair. These activities are ones with which both parents and teachers tend to feel most comfortable. The school should set a goal to have all parents involved in at least one support activity during the course of the year.

Parents as Learners means that parents have an opportunity to increase their knowledge about the school curriculum, school policies, and other aspects of school life, as well as opportunities to increase their own parenting skills. Multiple ways need to be used to provide these learning opportunities.

Parents as Teachers reflects the crucial fact that parents are a child's first and foremost teacher. Schools need to encourage and foster this role even after the child starts school. Home-learning activities represent one important strategy. Classroom volunteer programs also provide opportunities for parents to 'teach' and help teachers.

Parents as Advisors, Decision Makers, and Advocates means that parents have the opportunity to share with teachers and administrators their views and influence decisions on issues that affect their children. Many schools have established school site advisory councils to help parents play this role. An active PTA also serves as a valuable advocacy group for students and the school. Training needs to be provided for parents willing to undertake these advisory and advocacy roles." (Chrispeels, 1987)

ARE SOME TYPES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT MORE VALUABLE THAN OTHERS?

The research seems to indicate there is no one best way to handle parent involvement. What seems to work best is for parents to be involved in a variety of roles over time. It is more important that parent involvement be reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting than the particular form. (Henderson, 1987)

Parent involvement has some benefits whether at school or at home. When teachers frequently involve parents in educational activities with their children at home, they feel more involved in the education of their children and they recognize the efforts and merits of teachers more. The most payoff for the most parents comes from teachers involving parents in helping their children learn at home. (Epstein, Winter, 1984)

Students do better in school as long as parents are the basic ingredient in improvement strategy. Public relations campaigns, one-way communications devices, or dog-and-pony shows are not effective. (Henderson, 1987)

HOW EXTENSIVE IS PARENT PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL?

In a survey of over 1,200 parents in 16 districts in Maryland the parents indicated that:

- About 70 percent of the parents never helped the teacher in the classroom or on field trips.
- About 70 percent never participated in the administration of fund-raising activities for the school.
- About 88 percent never assisted in the library, cafeteria, or other school areas.

Even in communications between parents and the school, some parents receive very little information. In one survey, 16 percent of the parents reported they receive no memos from their child's teacher, over 35 percent did not attend parent-teacher conferences, and about 60 percent never spoke to the teacher on the phone. (Epstein, January 1986)

DO PARENTS WANT TO BE MORE INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION?

A recent Gallup poll found that parents with school age children endorsed the idea of attending school one evening a month to learn how to improve their children's school performance. (Moles, 1982) A survey of more than 3,000 parents in six states in the south and southwest found that more than 95 percent supported the value of parent involvement. (Chavkin, 1985)

HOW DO PARENTS WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION?

Parents want to be involved in both traditional (receiving communications, attending school activities, participating as chaperones, in fund raising, and helping with homework) and nontraditional ways (decision-makers, colearners, and advocates). (Partnerships . . ., 1985)

Over 80 percent of the parents in a survey of 3,103 parents in six states were interested in classroom discipline methods, and assisting in evaluating how well their children were learning, setting school behavior rules, and the amount of homework assigned. They were also much more interested in participating in decisions about textbooks; hiring, evaluating, and firing principals and teachers; setting rules for grading and passing of children; and helping decide what to teach and when than educators thought would be useful. (Chavkin, 1985)

". . . parents are eager to play all roles at school, from tutor to classroom assistant to decision-maker." (Henderson, 1987)

FAMILY-SCHOOL COOPERATION

List the following:

Five outcomes desired in/for your school graduates

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Five things families must do to produce these outcomes.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Five things schools must do to produce these outcomes.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Five things families can do to help schools.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Five things schools can do to help families.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

THE CHANGING AMERICAN FAMILY

Although research and common sense acknowledge the importance of parent involvement in their children's education, schools are experiencing increasing difficulty in obtaining that involvement. Attendance at PTA meetings, school open houses, and parent-teacher conferences is poor in too many cases. An important factor in this is the changing demographics affecting family life, as follows:

1. In 1986, 62.8 percent of all women with children under 18 years old worked outside the home. Nationally, 70 percent of women with children ages six to thirteen are in the work force.

2. In Arizona, the number of families with both parents working outside the home has increased 120 percent since 1960.

3. Only seven percent of the households in the United States consisted of a working father, a housewife mother, and two or more children in 1985.

4. In 1982, 22 percent of United States households with children were single-parent homes. For black children, 49 percent live in single-parent homes.

5. According to estimates, 40-50 percent of all school age children will live, during some of their school years, as part of a one-parent home.

6. One out of every five mothers in the work force was maintaining her own family in 1986.

7. Of all female headed households in Arizona, 32.5 percent live in poverty. (1980 Census)

8. Of all families with children in Arizona, 11.6 percent live in poverty. (1980 Census)

9. Children under 16 years of age comprise 31.3 percent of poverty population; one of every six children in Arizona lives in poverty. (1980 Census)

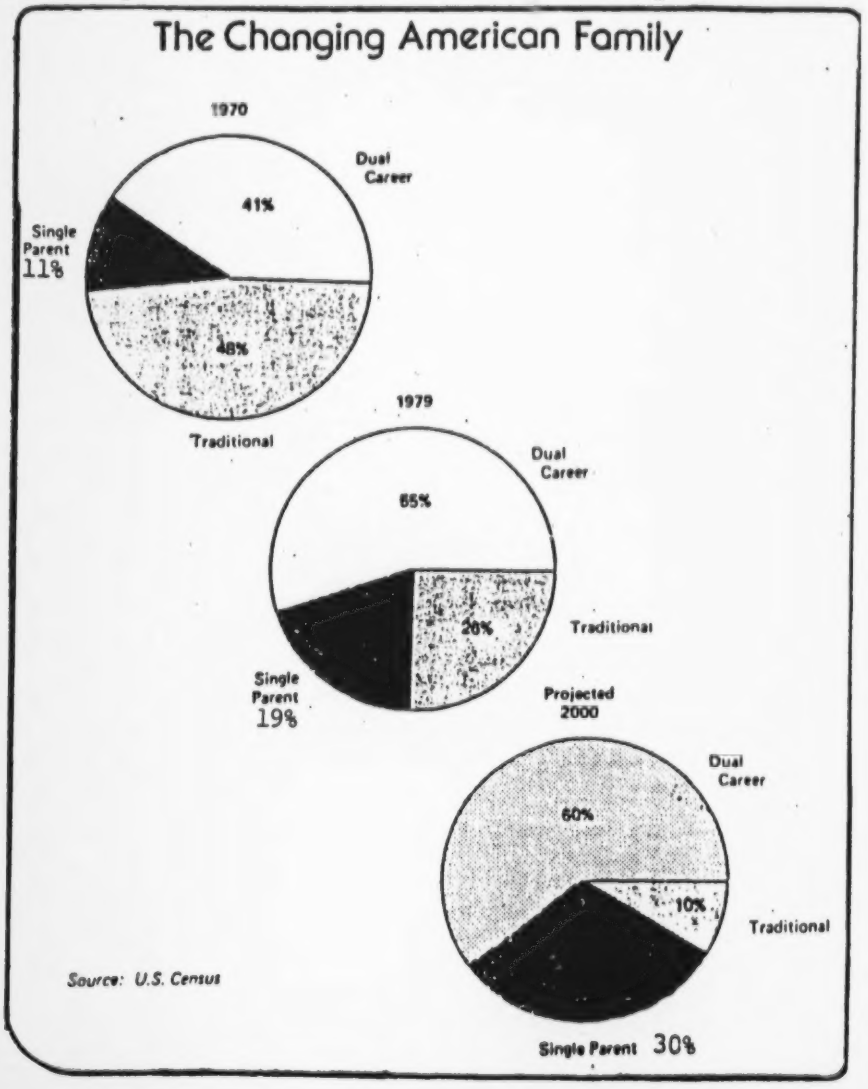
10. Teenage marriages are increasing.
    a. One in four marriages—teenagers
    b. 36 percent of teen marriages due to pregnancy.

11. In Arizona, 102 births in 1984 were to unwed teens under the age of 15. In the 15- to 19-year-old group, there were 4,395 births to unwed teens.

    In 1984, there were 10,800 pregnancies among Arizona girls, ages 15 to 19.

12. In 1987, of the 3.6 million children entering school, 15 percent will be immigrants who speak a language other than English; 10 percent will have poorly educated illiterate parents.

(Data compiled from: Arizona Community Action Association, Incorporated, 1985; Epstein, 1984; Governor's Council on Children, Youth, and Family, 1984; Lambro, 1987; Mirga, 1987; National Commission on Working Women, n.d.)



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IMPLICATIONS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Some of the implications of the statistics relative to changes in families in planning for parent involvement are:

1. Meetings and conferences may need to be held outside the usual 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. work hours. Consider early evening, before school, or even lunch hour sessions.

2. Any parent involvement activity must be very well planned and worthwhile. Parents are very busy and cannot afford to have their time wasted. They will not settle for "tokenism" or "busy work."

3. The mothers of several kindergarten-age children may be quite young—in their early twenties. They may be finding it very difficult to cope with their day-to-day problems of survival. Further, their experiences with school may have been very negative, which they may unconsciously communicate to their child.

4. Many strategies will need to be used to communicate with parents, and to involve them in their child's education. Be creative and innovative in your approaches.

5. A translator should be available at meetings and conferences attended by parents with limited English language facility. When possible, have newsletters and other written materials printed in native languages.

6. Transportation arrangements for parents will need to be considered for low-income parents.

7. Provisions may need to be made for child care while the parents are attending activities at school.

8. Special efforts may be needed to make parents feel welcome and comfortable at the school.

9. More emphasis may be needed on outreach efforts, and working with parents at home.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES/BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Perhaps you are thinking, "I would like to see more parent involvement, but how do we get it? We cannot even get people to come out for open house or PTA."

First, let us look at some beliefs about parent involvement:

- people are happiest in groups;
- it is human nature for people to be interested in and involved in things which affect them, their children, and their neighbors;
- community and school apathy is contrary to human nature;
- community and school apathy develops in response to conditions within the community or school which inhibit parent involvement;
- as the obstacles are identified and removed, parent involvement will increase automatically.

Some of the obstacles to involvement are:

- Poor school/community communications. How does the school communicate with the community? A newsletter sent home with children? How many ever arrive? And, how many are read? What other strategies might be used? Word-of-mouth is the best method. Are you using the bus drivers, school lunch room workers, secretaries to get the positive word out about the school? What means do you have to get feedback about the school?
- Limited skills by parents in working with school groups and government bodies. When people do not know who to contact, how to get organized, and run meetings, they will be reluctant to participate. Arrange for workshops and seminars for the parents and community members on leadership and organizational skills.
- Offer of only "token" participation. When people are invited to a meeting, too often it is to inform them of something, sell them on an idea, pacify them, influence them or manipulate them--or to get them to donate time or money. Seldom do we bring

together people to really look at a problem, to gain their ideas, and to listen to and consider their solutions. How often are parents brought in on the initial planning stages of a program, rather than after nearly everything has been decided?

- Resistance on the part of formal leadership. Is there an unwillingness-conscious or unconscious among some of the existing leadership in your school and community to involve others in decision-making? Is citizen input really encouraged? Take a close look at how decisions are made in your school and community.
- Community attitude and expectations. Achievement is very much determined by our attitudes and expectations. If we think the school and community cannot get together, they very likely never will. What are the expectations here? Are certain groups labeled as not interested and uncooperative?
- Feeling that the average parent has neither the opportunity nor the ability to participate. Perhaps, we educators are the most guilty of this one. We think that all decisions about curriculum and instruction should be made only by teachers, administrators, and others with expertise. Yet parents and community members have a set of life experiences that has contributed to their success or failure. They know the things they learned which helped them to be successful. They are acutely aware of what they did not know that interfered with their success. Parents and community members have insights into the current and future skills and knowledge needed in various occupations. They also know what they learned that contributed to the enrichment of life in nonworking hours. For these reasons their input is vital to educational planning (Dunn, 1977).

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: MOTIVATING PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE

You do not recruit involved parents, you develop them.

Once some of the obstacles to parent involvement have been removed, a developmental effort is then necessary to provide the self-confidence, knowledge, and skills that a person needs to effectively participate. Particularly important is the development of CITIZEN SELF-DISCOVERY--**"that I can make a difference."** Until this is developed in an individual, the provision of information and opportunities to participate will be unused.

Communities are made up of individuals.

When discussing parent involvement, we often fail to put faces on the masses of people making up a community. We tend to spend out time looking for ways to motivate communities, rather than concentrating on the motivation of individuals. When you complain of parent apathy specifically who are you referring to? Tailor your approach to them.

Parent involvement, thus is an individual, developmental process. There is no simple formula for motivating people to take an active part, but the following will be helpful. It takes more than a single approach.

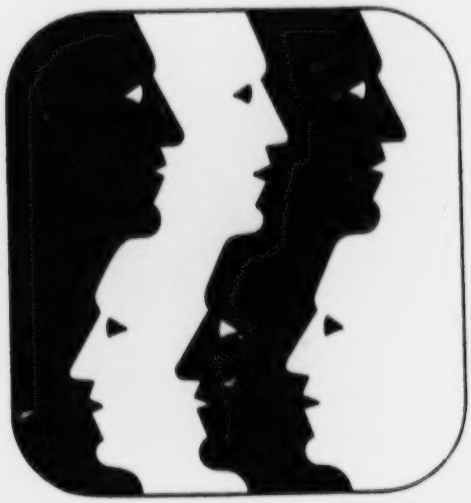
- Parent participation and support is best developed on a one-to-one, face-to-face basis. Studies show that most people get involved in voluntary action because some friend or neighbor personally asked them to. Mass appeals generally are ineffective, and not long maintained.
- Appeal to the individual's basic needs and interests. Individuals will participate in different issues, activities and groups only to the extent that their personal needs and interests are appealed to and met.
- Encouragement, accomplishment, and recognition are essential to maintaining active involvement. To be appreciated, to feel important and needed, is a key motivator in all of us!

- Much of the reluctance to participate can be overcome by matching the individual's talents to group needs. In recruiting individuals, indicate to them in specific terms why they were selected, and why their unique combination of knowledge, skills, and interests are vital to the success of the group. If you are sincere, it will be an offer they will not refuse.
- People are not as willing to do the leg work if they are not also involved in the planning.
- You can get people together, but it takes more than that. It takes preparation and **good organization.** Essential to the success and motivation of any group is a good discussion leader/chairman. Group productivity takes time and effort; it does not just magically happen.
- Define clearly the job to be done, and when it will likely be finished. Few people will volunteer for an unclear task for an indefinite period of time.
- Clearly define and communicate your purpose and goals. You motivate people by selling ideas, programs and results--not membership.
- Arrange for training in group action and interpersonal skills. We all need it.
- Strive to understand and respect other points of view on community issues, to develop empathy.
- Make an effort to understand the social, cultural, and physical environment of those you wish to involve.
- Good citizenship begins with being well-informed. Improving communications within your group and community is a first step in motivating others.
- One of the primary reasons people reject leadership roles is the fear of failing to communicate. Many of us have a negative self-image of our communicative abilities. This can be overcome through encouragement and expressed interest in what others have to say. Make people feel that their views are important to the discussion at hand.

- The ability to understand others begins with an understanding of one's self. How did **YOU** get to be the person that you are? What motivates **YOU** to do the things you do? Why do **YOU** react in different ways to different people, situations, and things?
- There is only one person you have much control over. And that person is yourself. So really work on him (her). Your example can have a tremendous influence on others.
- **Listen!** A person is motivated to achieve when he feels his ideas and suggestions are listened to and respected.
- Be positive. Negativism is so common in our approach to citizen involvement: "I am sorry to have to call this meeting. I will make it as fast as possible." "Being chairman is a thankless job, but it has to be done." Etc. Either an activity is important and necessary, or it should be eliminated.
- Avoid unnecessary meetings--there are other ways of communicating.

Apply the above in your individual contacts and you will be surprised how well they work. Participation can be increased in your group and community.

It is up to **YOU** (Dunn, 1977).



GETTING AND KEEPING PARENTS INVOLVED

- Parents need to know you really want and need their help. Sending out a notice saying that may not be convincing. Personal contact works a lot better. It is more difficult to say no to a telephone request than it is to one presented on a crumpled paper carried home by a child. Furthermore, this personal contact can help insure a broadly based committee instead of one comprised of the people who volunteer for everything.
- Parents need to know the scope of a committee's charge, the time commitment expected of them, and that what they are doing is important to the school and their children. This should be included in the recruitment effort to attract members.
- Parents need to be convinced that their services/advice/recommendations will be thoroughly considered when ultimate decisions are reached.
- Parents need to feel that their efforts are appreciated. In addition to a simple thank you, show concern about TRANSPORTATION and CHILD CARE for meetings. Publicize names and committee appointments, plan appreciation dinners or other activities, include members' photos in yearbooks and/or news articles.
- Parents need to understand process skills used for decision-making. Not all parents have the tradition of reaching group decisions and the processes necessary to accomplish this. If parents are expected to be true partners in decisions, the process (and the administrator) should not be allowed to intimidate or dominate them. Prepare everyone for mistakes, broken communications, upsets, setbacks, temporary lags in action.

SOME SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS ARE NEEDED:

- Not all parents had a happy experience with their own schooling and may need strong encouragement to return to a school building.
- A more neutral setting than a school may work better--church, etc.

- Language may be a problem--some parents feel that they do not express themselves well and will be further intimidated by "educationese--jargon."
- Non-English or limited English speaking parents face other barriers. Send invitations out in the language they use, or have a person call them who speaks their language. Be sure to have bilingual people at all meetings so that parents can express themselves in the language they speak.
- Some parents expect immediate solutions or quick responses to recommendations. It may be wise to provide some skills in group decision making, or divide the work or areas of concern into small sections so that success can be seen in some areas while others continue to be studied (Payne, 1984).

FOR THE COORDINATOR

Do's and Don'ts for Parental Involvement Programs

DO'S

1. **Do Place a Worker in Charge.**

   Someone who is proven and who has a genuine interest in parent and community education should direct the program in each school. The integrity of the leader means community support.

2. **Do Start Work with the School's Supporters.**

   Start the program with the "positive people," then add others. The same holds true for the school personnel--start with the positive people.

3. **Do Create Momentum.**

   Begin with a workable plan and expand it; build upon each success; grow.

4. **Do Ask for Real Help.**

   Parents and community volunteers know the difference between "rubber stamp" participation on advisory groups and meaningful assistance. Real help with classroom activities is more likely to generate support.

5. **Do Match Resources and Needs.**

   Find out what teachers need in their classrooms, in the library, and in the office. Survey parents, contact community groups, and match the real needs to real helpers.

6. **Do Make Many Contacts with Homes and the Community.**

   Keep a file of every general communication from your school. Examine it and determine what the communication conveys. Does it say to the homes, "Here is another appeal for money"? Or do the messages convey, "This is your school, and your child's progress is our progress"? Become visible in the community through newspaper articles, posters in businesses, and displays in the library. Communicate that together the school and the community are educating the children.

* * * * *

DON"TS

1. **Don't Require Participation.**

   There are always teachers who are willing to participate. Start with the willing teachers, and the number of participants will increase.

2. **Don't Criticize.**

   Share successes. Criticism weakens your efforts.

3. **Don't Let Any One Person Shoulder All the Responsibility.**

   For any program to work, it must be a cooperative program with many people working together.

4. **Don't Isolate Your Program.**

   Locate in a very visible place in the school. Attend every possible function in the school and in the community.

5. **Don't be Afraid to Say What You Need.**

   Go to the Source! If it is someone's time you need; if it is a typewriter you need; if it is support you need, ask.

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Do's and Don'ts for Working with Parents and Community Volunteers

DO'S

1. **Do Be Positive.**

   Contact parents at the beginning of the year before there are any problems. Convey this message, "I am your child's teacher. I will be in touch with you often about your child's progress, and there are some ways we can work together."

2. **Do Invite Parents on an Individual Basis.**

   Issue many general invitations to your school, to your classroom, such as open house and special programs; but the most effective invitations are those that go directly to individuals: "Ms. Smith, I need you to help in the classroom."

3. **Do Plan Specific Tasks for Volunteers**

   Help parents and community helpers feel more comfortable by telling them exactly what to do. Plan, go over the directions, and praise the workers for their efforts.

4. **Do Schedule Frequent Conferences with the Parents to Discuss the Child's Progress.**

   Remember these points for successful conferences with parents. . .

   - o Schedule the conference at a convenient time.
   - o Allow plenty of time.
   - o Arrange comfortable seating away from the teacher's desk.
   - o Have several examples of the child's work at hand.
   - o Be positive. "Here is the problem, and here is how your child and I are working on the problem. What else do you advise us to do?"
   - o Allow the child to participate in the conference if he/she is old enough to contribute.

- o Take notes after the parent leaves, and follow up on what you agreed to do.
- o Write a note to the parent, thanking him or her for meeting with you and for assisting you to teach the child.
- o Be aware that the person who most cares about the child and his success in school is the parent.
- o Expect parental cooperation. You will not be disappointed; parents, like children, often live up to what is expected of them by the teacher.

5. **Do Share Your Success Stories.**

   Success breeds success, so be sure to tell other parents and other teachers about how well the classroom parent volunteer or community helper is doing.

* * * * *

DON'TS

1. **Don't Invite Parents to Participate until You Have a List of Clear, Concrete Ideas for Them to Carry Out.**

   Many tasks in school involve listening and practice. Children need to listen to good reading to know how reading should sound. Children need to practice reading, practice their speech or science report, practice thinking out loud to solve their math problems. With just a little guidance, volunteers can enrich the classroom for he teacher who is willing to plan for them.

2. **Don't Criticize Children's Abilities.**

   Instead of criticizing children, make working statements: "We need to help Mark work on missing addends"; not "Mark is so slow, he will never get this."

3. **Don't Divulge any Private Information.**

   No matter how close you feel to the parent who has worked in your classroom, you are the professional; and private information should not be shared.

4. **Don't Schedule Conferences with Parents on a Tightly Limited or All-Day Basis.**

   Too little time leaves parents feeling their child isn't important to you. Back-to-back conferences are easy to get off schedule. It is better to plan two or three conferences a day, after or during school, than to have ten a day.

5. **Don't Forget the Telephone.**

   Taking time to call is very special to parents. It expresses an openness and willingness to communicate.

* * * * * * * * * * *

(A Plan for Excellence, 1985)

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND SPECIAL PARENTS

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND SPECIAL GROUPS OF PARENTS SUCH AS WORKING PARENTS, SINGLE PARENTS, PARENTS WITH LIMITED EDUCATION, AND LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS?

Parents' level of education has no connection with their ability to use at-home instructional techniques or with their willingness to help. (Moles, 1982)

Low income and minority families are strongly interested in the present education and future success of their children, according to a number of studies. (Moles, 1984) They want to be involved and will participate if invited and given direction by the schools. (N.C.E.A., n.d.) When low-income parents were trained to work with their children, there was a significant improvement in how well children used language skills, performed on tests, and behaved in school. (Henderson, 1987)

Working mothers help as much with school work and other forms of participation with student learning as those not employed outside the home. (Moles, 1982) To involve two-earner families, schools need to give early warning of school problems, adjust their schedules, and plan activities well in advance. Work places need to allow flexible, short term leave for parents of young children. (Moles, 1984)

"Single parents reported that their children were assigned more minutes of homework on an average evening and that they spent more minutes, on the average, helping their children with home assignments than did married parents. Single parents felt more pressure than did married parents to assist their children at home, spent more time on home-learning activities, but still felt that they did not always have enough time and energy to do what was expected by the teacher. Overall, single parents had better relations with teachers who were leaders in the use of learning activities at home than with teachers who did not emphasize parent involvement." (Epstein, 1984)

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES FOR SPECIAL PARENTS

Because of the diversity of American parents, you may need to take a few extra steps to get parents involved in your school. Some basics you can use are:

- Survey your community. Get a clear picture of what kinds and how many different groups of parents there are. Ask about their special needs, interests, and concerns. Try to identify the barriers that can keep these parents from getting involved in your school.

- Provide opportunities for staff and parents to get together socially. Sports events, street fairs, potluck suppers, and bazaars are fun for everyone and can build relationships you could never achieve in formal conferences.

- Ask these parents to serve on committees and task forces you appoint so that their interests and concerns are represented. Remember to get their views on such issues as textbook selection, educational planning, and school closings. Involve these parents before they feel the need to band together and form special interest groups that could develop adversarial relationships with your school.

- Be aware of and sensitive to the parents' special needs. Conduct sensitivity workshops for staff and students. Be supportive, without being over-indulgent. Be honest and be fair.

- When reaching out to these groups, make sure you've identified the most effective channels: What organizations do they belong to? Who are their spokespersons and leaders? What places do they frequent? Where are their neighborhood centers? Where do they work?

Some SPECIAL Tips

MINORITY Parents

1. Educators should explore any of their own personal attitudes and actions that might reinforce negative stereotypes of and prejudices toward minorities.

2. Encourage acceptance and understanding of cultural and ethnic diversity. Be aware of religious and cultural holidays when planning sports schedules, meetings, etc.

3. Include integrated materials in your displays, printed materials, publications, libraries, and classrooms.

4. Use parents as community resources.

5. Understand and appreciate different language patterns and be open and tolerant when you communicate and interact with parents.

SOURCE: Division of School Equity
Pennsylvania Department of Education

SINGLE Parents

1. Provide special training for teachers and counselors to help children of divorced, deceased, or unmarried parents.

2. Schedule school conferences or "rap" sessions in the early morning or evening, or on weekends, to accommodate working parents. Provide child care facilities at the school during the meeting. Don't assume that parents have their own transportation.

3. When sending communications home, avoid the traditional "Dear Parents" salutation. Single parents may feel a plural salutation is a condescending one. Use "Dear Parent" instead.

4. Be sensitive about traditional "Mother's Day" or "Father's Day" activities, mother-daughter get-togethers, and father-son get-togethers.

5. Know the custody situation in each family. Maybe you should send duplicate notes or report cards, or scheduling separate parent-teacher conferences.

SOURCE: National School Public Relations Association

Parents of Children in SPECIAL EDUCATION

1. Find ways to include parents in already existing programs to enrich their child's educational experience. Develop a list of suggestions and give parents tips they can use at home.

2. Use parent observers on your evaluation teams.

3. Sponsor parent education programs. Consider using the Parent Training Parent package available through the Education Department.

4. Use parents as volunteers in the classroom to assist teachers and teacher aides.

5. Provide parental training in Individual Educational Progam (IEP) development.

SOURCE: Bureau of Special Education
Pennsylvania Department of Education

Parents Whose PRIMARY LANGUAGE IS NOT ENGLISH

1. Prepare publications, messages to the home, and other information in the primary language of the parents you are addressing.

2. Cultural differences in attitudes, styles, and practices related to education and the school should be fully understood in order for the school to avoid practices that alienate culturally-different parents.

3. Recruit volunteer interpreters to promote communication with parents who do not speak English.

4. Develop a plan to help parents of bilingual/bicultural students understand the role they can play in the educational process--at school and at home--and to share information about issues of concern to them.

5. Set up building-level bilingual education advisory committees made up of parents and teachers to assist with planning and problem-solving and to foster a positive environment for parents and students in the school building.

SOURCE: Bilingual Education Adviser
Pennsylvania Department of Education

Parents Who are MIGRANT WORKERS

1. Migrant families come from diverse ethnic groups. They come to your communities with different cultures. They may have never seen snow or owned warm clothing. Help them adjust to their new environment.

2. The family may have trouble communicating with you if English is not its primary language.

3. A bilingual person should orient a program for parents on school programs, policies, and expectations.

4. Encourage migrant family members to share their culture with members of the community. Provide a forum for this exchange. Sponsor programs which allow for the sharing of music, food, customs, and traditions.

5. Teachers or school personnel can obtain academic and health information about their migrant students through the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS).

SOURCE: PA Migrant Education Program
Pennsylvania Department of Education

Parents of DAUGHTERS

1. Student surveys show that boys undervalue the lives of girls and women, that boys are encouraged to enroll in advanced mathematics courses more than girls are, and that boys' career choices are more diversified than girls' career choices. Conduct your own student survey to assess sex-role attitudes and report your findings to parents or a local newspaper.

2. When sponsoring parent nights or other events for parents, be aware of the special needs of their daughters. For example, if computer literacy is an issue, discuss the tendency of girls to be disinterested in computers.

3. When sending career or vocational education information to parents, remember to specifically mention "daughters" and "sons". Many parents are not aware that nine of ten girls today can expect to work in the labor force, and six of ten will work for about 26 years.

4. Involve parents in the celebration of Women's History Week, the second week in March. The Department of Education develops a special package for this event each year.

5. Schedule a special workshop or meeting on specific topics that parents of daughters are concerned about, i.e., girls' interscholastic sports, pregnancy and birth control,

sexual harassment, or integration of girls and boys in formerly segregated opportunities, such as after school clubs, industrial arts, home economics courses, vocational education programs, and intramural sports.

SOURCE: Vocational Education Equity Program
Pennsylvania Department of Education

(Boren, 1984)

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: SUMMARY

Parent involvement takes time.

There have been, and still remain, many forces in the school and community which discourage citizens from becoming involved. These will not be removed overnight. Also, parent involvement entails human development, and human development takes time. A magic elixir has not yet been invented which overnight can convert apathy into a human dynamo.

This is not to imply that nothing can be accomplished in a short period of time. We are always under some time constraints, and are forced to operate as best we can within them. But we must recognize these limitations, and realize that they will limit our results.

Be realistic in what you expect from your actions and the time frame in which you expect it. You cannot expect everyone to become immediately interested and concerned about "your" project. A school must continually deal with the reality of trying to meet unlimited needs with limited resources. We each have our own priorities as to what should be done. Do not confuse apathy with differences of opinion.

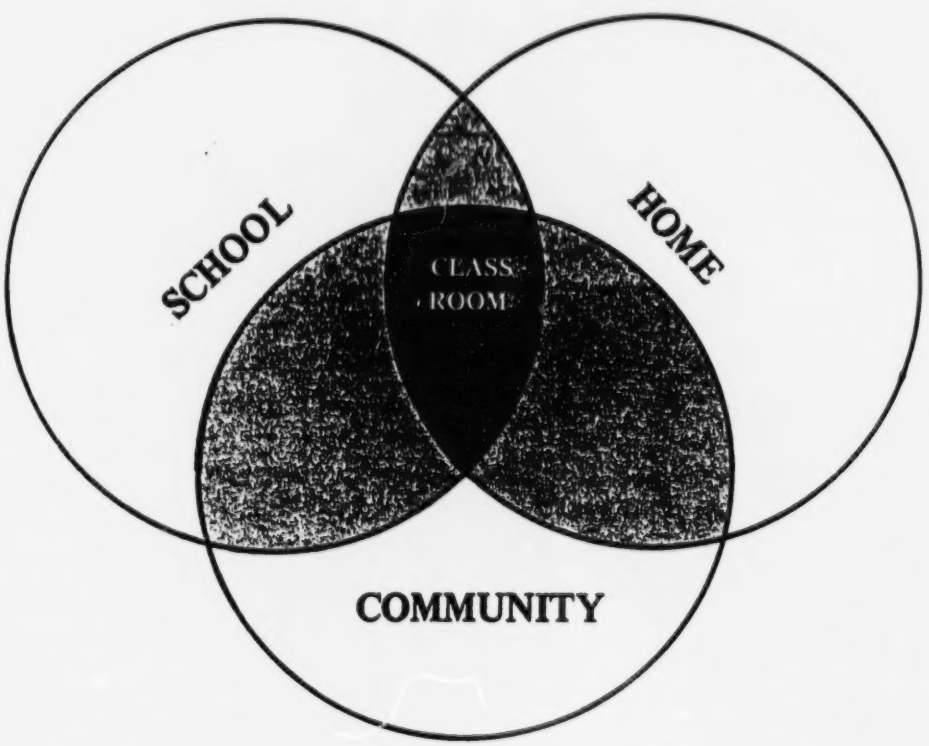
Be patient. Many people lose patience with and criticize a school or organization that has a diversity of opinion and is slow in reaching group consensus. This is unfortunate, because participation is effective only when there is a diversity of viewpoints. That is what democracy is all about. Be patient with human weaknesses, as well. We all have them.

Keep trying. We tend to give up too easily. The often heard argument is, "We tried a parent participation program once and it did not work." What did not work? A technique which shows poor results on a given occasion has not necessarily failed, it may just need adjustment. And besides, it takes more than a single approach. NASA did not stop work in space travel when one rocket failed. And a community is more complex than a rocket.

Finally, parent involvement must eventually entail higher ideals than getting turnout and support for individual activities. Parent participation, to be of real value to the school, must be a concerted ongoing effort. Permanent structures and procedures must be established within the school, which stimulate and make productive use of parent input. Accomplishment will depend, to a great extent, on the willingness and ability of school leaders to devote their time to securing it.

Parent participation is both a democratic right and responsibility. Responsibility for meaningful parent participation lies with the parent as well as with school officials. For parent participation to be sustained, it must be a pleasant, rewarding, and productive experience for both the individual and the school seeking that participation. We cannot do it alone, but we can start by doing our part.

A brief summary in the form of a worksheet follows. Apply it to your school the next time you are seeking parent support and participation. **GOOD LUCK!** (Dunn, 1977.)



WORK SHEET

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TOWARD PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. What does your school hope to accomplish through broader parent participation and support? Be specific. And be frank.

2. Specifically, who are the people you wish to involve?

3. Take a close look at your school. Take a close look at the specific audience you are trying to reach. What do you see as obstacles in the school/community, and specifically among your desired audience, to the type of involvement you are seeking? List these.

4. For each of the obstacles identified, list ways to overcome them.

(Adapted from Dunn, 1977)

5. Look over the "Ideas for Parent Involvement" on pages 34-44 in the Handbook. Recall other ideas you have used or know about for parent involvement. What would you like to see your school do relative to parent involvement during the next one-two years?

TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT	SUGGESTED ACTIVITY
Communications:	
Parents as Supporters:	
Parents as Learners:	
Parents as Teachers:	
Parents as Advisors, Decision-Makers, Advocates:	

ABC's OF WORKING WITH PARENTS

Accept parents as they are.
Believe that parents are sincerely concerned about all aspects of their child's growth and development.
Compliment parents on their child's attitude, behavior, performance.
Discuss topics that interest parents.
Encourage parents to become involved in their child's education.
Familiarize yourself with each family's situation.
Give parents an opportunity to question and express their opinions.
Help parents develop confidence in their abilities. Parents have much to offer the school program.
Invite parents to participate in all school activities.
Judge not.
Know the community resources available to parents.
Listen to what parents are saying.
Make every effort to involve all parents. Telephone calls and home visits are helpful.
Never say it can't be done.
Offer opportunities for parents to develop a better understanding of the school program.
Plan appropriate activities for parent volunteers.
Question open-endedly to stimulate more discussion rather than using close-ended questions.
Remember that school is not the only factor influencing the family.
Show that you are genuinely interested in the parents.
Thank parents for attending meetings, serving as volunteers.
Understand that parents have a right to express their opinions.
Vary your approaches to parent involvement.
Welcome parents and be sincere.
X-ray your parent involvement program regularly.
You must help parents feel comfortable and needed.
Zeal on your part is essential to a successful parent involvement program.

Contributed by:
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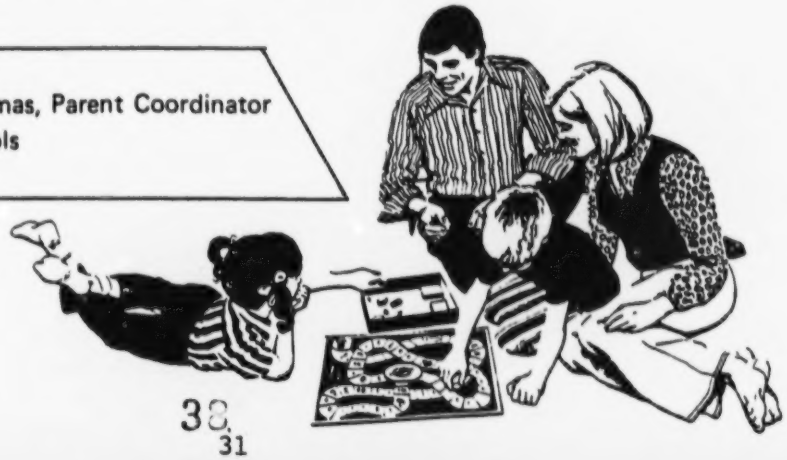
Tucson, Arizona



SECTION II

Ideas for Parental Involvement

IDEAS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Home-School Communications: Communication is the foundation for all other parent involvement activities. Yet, most parents typically hear from the school only when their child is in trouble. Positive examples of efforts to improve communication are listed below:

Personal Contact:

1. Hold a "Parent Get Acquainted Coffee and Continental Breakfast" in the fall.

2. Invite new children and their parents to a "Get Acquainted Hour" the week before school starts.

3. Invite new teachers and new parents to a tour of the district. Cover points of interest, local churches, facilities available in the area, places that could be used for field trips, boundaries of attendance area.

4. Develop a slide presentation orienting new parents and students to the school.

5. Establish regular visitation days for observation of classes and a chance for parents to offer constructive suggestions.

6. Invite parents to come with pupils to "See What I Do in School" one day during the year.

7. Invite parents to visit classrooms whenever they wish to do so and send special invitations for culmination of a unit, puppet play, songfest, etc.

8. Arrange meetings with parents whenever an innovation in curriculum and instruction is to be tried.

9. Invite parents of a particular grade level, such as sixth grade, to informal "buzz" sessions in small groups on school-related topics of concern to parents and teachers, such as discipline, homework, or communicating with that age child.

Personal Contacts (Continued):

10. Have open houses for one grade level at a time. Small groups of parents lend better to communication.

11. Vary the times for open houses. Hold some in the afternoon, some at night.

12. Set up parent conference days during the school year for parents to come to school to discuss progress with their child's teacher.

13. Schedule a parent-teacher conference in a student's home. (It'll help you see what it's like for some parents to come to school.)

14. Hold monthly informal "rap sessions". Plan to drink lots of coffee, share lots of information, and do lots of listening to concerns while building goodwill and feelings of unity.

15. Organize special outreach efforts to hard-to-reach parents through telephone calls, home visits, special mailed invitations to parents in home language to have lunch at school with children.

16. Invite fathers to a breakfast with teachers where discussion will take place and dads may then visit classes as their day permits.

17. Have teachers select a "Student of the Month". The student's parents are invited to lunch with the principal and parents of other "Students of the Month". Invite community leaders to the lunch also.

18. Have children prepare a luncheon for parents, teachers, and themselves. Send handwritten invitations.

19. Invite several parents to sample the school lunch once a month. Seat them with the principal, a teacher, and several randomly selected students.

20. Invite each parent to have lunch with their child at school during American Education Week.

Personal Contacts (Continued):

21. Let the students in your room cook an evening meal or a luncheon for their parents. While they are eating, let the children tell what they're learning.

22. Hold a bean and hot dog supper and open house coordinated with a talent show. Allow children to show their parents around the school building.

23. Hold a "Grandparent's Day" to honor grandparents with special recognition given to those who had made a contribution to the school.

24. Hold a "Senior Citizen Day" at the school, inviting grandparents and other older friends of the school. Provide transportation.

25. Set up a plan for principals to make "house calls".

26. Make it possible for teachers to make home visits at least occasionally.

27. Try neighborhood coffees in parents' homes. Invite people in area to meet informally with the principal and one or two teachers to talk about school and education.

28. Conduct home visits involving teachers and trained volunteers. (See description of "Weinberg's Home Visitation Program" on pages 47-49.)

29. Be sure that teachers are represented and recognized at PTA or other parent group meetings.

30. Encourage teachers to become more visible in the community.

31. Seek out the parents who never participate. Sometimes these parents feel inadequate or timid and simply need to be encouraged and needed.

32. Use the "grapevine" network; nothing is more powerful and gets the word out faster.

33. Provide translators and translations.

Personal Contacts (Continued):

34. Establish a Home-School Cooperation Committee. Exchange reports with other schools.

Telephone:

35. Make an effort to improve the telephone answering techniques of everyone in the school office.

36. Try teacher phone calls to parents to invite them to back-to-school nights.

37. Occasionally, ask the child to have parents call the teacher rather than the teacher contact the parent.

38. Set up a listeners' bureau in your community. Suggest members advertise their telephone numbers. Let them know that you really want to know what is being said, and be sure to let them know when you have followed up on concerns they have shared with you.

39. Advertise one evening a week when parents or students can telephone the principal to ask questions or discuss problems.

40. Have teachers make at least one positive phone call per week to a parent to report on a child's accomplishment.

Written:

41. Hold staff workshops on communications skills with a special focus on parents.

42. Have an information brochure on your school for visitors, for parents to send to grandparents, or for graduates to have as keepsakes.

43. Improve the quality and frequency of school newsletters. Try mailing home.

44. In each month's newsletter, publish the names and phone numbers of a few parents who are willing to talk to other parents about any kind of interest or concern.

Written (Continued):

45. Set up an idea exchange in the school newspaper. Ask parents to send in ideas. Then, in a later issue of the paper, publish ideas and how they are used.

46. Writing in the school plan that each teacher will send home weekly class newsletters.

47. Send home "Happy-Grams"--good news notes about accomplishments and achievements.

48. Send home weekly notices in a school envelope, inviting two-way communication on the envelope.

49. Send home weekly lesson plans (one page so parents can follow the week's lesson).

50. Send preprinted postcards to parents.

51. Provide a weekly student performance contract which student, parent, and teacher sign.

52. Set goals for each child and send home notes that parents must sign and return.

53. Send weekly or bimonthly progress reports to parents.

54. Reward students for returning signed notices, homework, etc.

55. Advise parents of the teacher's conference periods or other best times to reach the teacher.

56. Take note of the fact that more fathers are participating in school activities. Be sure to include fathers in all school communications.

57. Have a monthly birthday calendar posted in the hallway with everyone's birthday on it. Be sure to add new students when they arrive.

Written (Continued):

58. Request that when a parent visits school that he/she complete a survey, perhaps while enjoying a cup of coffee, on their interests and needs.

59. Obtain parent surveys on key issues and invite parent opinions (e.g., sexuality issues, discipline policies, home-school communications).

60. Have students conduct a survey of parents to evaluate the school and collect ideas for improvement. Distribute the survey results to all parents.

61. Survey after parent-teacher conferences. Ask how effective your conferences are and what additional kinds of information parents want about your school classroom. The responses will help you identify communication needs.

Other:

62. Follow up on problems and resolve complaints--no matter how small or insignificant they may seem. Little things have a way of building into big things.

63. Turn people on. Show you are genuinely interested in what they are doing. Exude enthusiasm!

64. Have tooth envelopes for sending home the teeth that <u>finally</u> come out at school with a note from the teacher. These are tender moments parents don't want to miss.

65. Have parents obtain articles to be sold in "Santa's Secret Shop" to enable children to purchase gifts for family members.

66. Urge teacher training institutions to place more importance on home-school cooperation in their teacher education programs.

Parents as Learners: This category of involvement represents the opportunities schools are giving parents to learn about the school program and to increase their skills to help their children. Schools may wish to:

67. Reassure parents that parental support does make a difference.

68. Encourage parents to praise their child's successes.

69. Set up a Parent's Shelf in the school library of books and materials which can be checked out by parents and used at home with their children.

70. Provide parents with learning materials.

71. Invite those who never come to school to come and observe the classroom, guide them in what to look for and discuss what they saw afterwards.

72. Hold "Brown Bag" days in which parents and teachers meet on an informal basis for lunch. Parent gets firsthand knowledge of types of programs and skills the child is doing.

73. Suggest parents shadow their student (jr./sr. high school) to experience a typical day.

74. Organize field trips with parents and students together.

75. Offer computer and family math programs where parents and students can learn together.

76. Arrange athletic and academic contests between parents and students and teachers.

77. Provide specific information to parents on how they can help during parent/teacher conferences.

78. Hold demonstration classes for parents and other citizens.

Parents as Learners (Continued):

79. Conduct a weekly class for parents, taught by the school nurse, on childrens' health concerns.

80. Help parents learn about community resources available to help them.

81. Hold two to three hour seminars for parents on topics such as: "Helping Your Child Learn", "How to Help with Homework", "Coping with the Junior High Child", "Living with a Teenager", "Self-Esteem and Encouragement of Your Child".

82. Provide an opportunity for parents to get together with other parents for discussions about school problems.

83. Invite parents of a child having difficulties to meet with staff to explore ways to help and to use preventive techniques.

84. Link up parents of expelled or suspended students with parents who have successfully dealt with similar problems.

85. Conduct surveys and provide parents with research on such things as average hours of sleep per night by grade, average hours devoted to homework, television viewing, etc.

86. Organize a "Community School" to allow people of all ages to use your school for special interest classes, meetings, and recreational activities.

87. Find out location of Adult Basic Education of GED classes for parents who need to complete their education.

88. Offer ESL classes and other adult classes at your school. This helps parents feel comfortable at school so that they become involved.

89. Involve parents in discussions about junior high school while their children are still in elementary school. Do the same for junior high parents before their children reach high school.

Parents as Learners (Continued)

90. Hold high school department seminars for parents to help them help their children gain most from particular course offerings.

Parents as Teachers: Parents teach their children all the time. The school can play a role in helping parents teach by:

At Home:

91. Create a "How Parents Can Help" handbook which gives practical suggestions for home activities such as making out grocery lists, nature walks, etc.

92. Publish a monthly calendar of learning activities for each day to be done at home.

93. Help parents who are nonreaders to prepare their children to learn to read.

94. Have students interview their parents about how life has changed since their childhood.

95. Make progress charts--one at school for the teacher and one at home for the child and parent.

96. Suggest to parents ways to spend time with their children during the summer. Give them a list of community resources, places to visit, etc.

97. Provide parents with packets of learning materials to use during vacations.

98. Establish a district and schoolwide homework policy.

99. Provide information on how to ask questions and discuss homework.

100. Establish a "Homework Hotline" for parents to check on nightly assignments.

101. Give parents packets to take home and start libraries.

Parents as Teachers (Continued):

At School:

102. Recruit and train parents to provide a wide range of volunteer services--lunchroom monitoring, paper grading, chaperoning field trips, resource person in classroom, and tutoring.

103. Train parent volunteers to compile and create bilingual material to be used by classroom teachers.

104. Ask parents to assist in special clinics or counseling area.

105. Have parent helpers in the library to permit it to be open more hours.

106. Have parent volunteers to assist with producing Fine Arts productions.

107. Use parent volunteers in class to help those who are not helped at home.

108. Establish a classroom speaker's bureau with parents or relatives of children sharing their experiences, hobbies, job information, etc.

109. Tap into unique abilities and skills of parents for special interest and after school classes for children such as arts and crafts, foreign language, dance, drama, hobbies, physical exercise, etc.

110. Use parents as field trip helpers and observers.

111. Solicit help of room fathers and mothers with book fairs, bicycle rodeos, carnivals, breakfasts, etc.

112. Offer after school, extended day programs with time allotted for homework.

113. Start "Saturday Clubs" to provide enrichment programs, film showing, family recreational activities, etc. at the school.

Parents as Advocates, Advisors, and Decision-Makers: Parents can serve a valuable role as members of task forces, advisory committees, and school boards. Ideas for involving parents in this way are listed below.

114. Organize a Parent Advisory Committee to give an opportunity for parents to contribute ideas and suggestions concerning their child's education.

115. Set up high school parent advisory groups to assist in curricular and instructional changes and to aid in establishing goals and objectives for each department.

116. Invite parents to serve on curriculum development and textbook adoption committees.

117. Have parents contact colleges with suggestions for potential teachers.

118. Provide training for parents, teachers, and principals who serve in these leadership roles.

119. Listen carefully and respond to parents' concerns and needs.

120. Give parents meaningful roles.

Use this list of 120 ideas as a discussion guide to develop 120 more ideas for increasing parent involvement in your school.

(Boren, 1984; Chrispeels, 1986; Colley, n.d.; Community Education Section, 1985; Community Services Office, n.d.)

PARENTS AS RESOURCE PERSONS

Definition

A parent having particular skills, talents, or knowledge which he is willing to share with others is a potential resource person.

Rationale

Parents have been serving as resource persons to their children since their children were born. This valuable resource can be made available to other children if parents become involved as resource persons in the school setting. Parents who participate in this way can share their knowledge, talents, and skills with other children as well as their own. They may also be able to fill a role or provide information or talents which the teacher may not have. The sharing of parent resources provides all children learning opportunities which might otherwise be lost.

There are a multitude of ways in which parents can act as resource persons.

A. Parents are often aware of children's needs because of their knowledge of the customs, languages, mores, or traditions of the family or the community. This knowledge can be shared through

1. Language;
2. Music and dance;
3. Cooking;
4. Arts and crafts;
5. Literature;
6. History;
7. Clothing;
8. Games and sports;
9. Religious customs;
10. Walking trips to homes or other interesting places in the community; and
11. Special events (Cinco de Mayo, Black History Week, etc.)

B. Children are better able to understand the occupations of their parents and others if, as resource persons, parents share their particular skills with children. This helps children to become aware of their parents in a different role and to appreciate parents' responsibilities outside of the home.

1. They might demonstrate and/or talk about their occupations at school or at their place of employment. This could be done either for the entire class or a small group of children. It might become a part of a learning center featuring occupations.

2. They could demonstrate a particular skill relating to their occupation.

3. They could help the teacher collect materials relating to a certain occupation for use in a learning center.

C. Parents often have special abilities or hobbies which are interesting and exciting to children, such as

1. Playing a musical instrument;
2. Singing or dancing;
3. Artistic ability;
4. Physical skills such as playing ball, swimming, etc.;
5. Sharing collections of things;
6. Dramatics;
7. Sewing; and
8. Photography.

D. Parents might become paid workers in the school as

1. Helpers in the lunchroom;
2. Playground supervisor;
3. Teacher Aides;
4. Health Aides; and
5. Home visitors.

or help with school groups such as

1. Brownies or Girl Scouts;
2. 4-H
3. Boy Scouts
4. Campfire Girls; and
5. Parent Teacher Groups.

E. Parents may serve as resources to other parents by

1. Babysitting, so someone else can help in the school setting in some way;
2. Transporting other parents;
3. Translating for other parents;
4. Informing other parents;
5. Interpreting the school program to others;
6. Encouraging others; and
7. Disseminating information.

It is important for the school to be aware of special knowledges, talents, and skills parents have. One way of doing this is by having parents check a list of possible ways they could serve as resource persons. They might like to do this at the beginning of the school year.

Children, parents, school personnel, and the community all profit when parents share their many special abilities. ("Parents as Resource Persons," n.d.)

"GETTING TO KNOW OUR COMMUNITY"

Weinberg's Home Visitation Program

In August 1983, Weinberg Elementary School, of the Chandler Unified School District, opened its doors for the first time. We are nestled in the cotton fields and vineyards east of Chandler's city limits and north of the San Tan Mountain Range. Over 150 families from a patchwork quilt of cultural and economic backgrounds are served by the country school. We are designated as one of Chandler's Chapter I schools with a minority population of approximately 25 percent. Our attendance rate thus far has exceeded our goal. September's average daily attendance was 97.8 percent and October's was 96.7 percent, which ranked highest among the Chandler schools. In addition, our achievement test scores have been good indicators of our academic success. In 1984, the vast majority of our students met or exceeded National norms and we predict even better results in 1985.

One of the major considerations in any school setting should be the parental involvement component. In June of 1983, the Weinberg staff met as a management team for the first time. They believed that parent involvement was vital to our school's success and made a commitment to work toward establishing a strong, supportive, positively involved parent component. Therefore, a theme was adopted, "Getting to Know Our Community". The mind set was established and we moved forward.

A parent teacher organization was organized by affording all parents an opportunity to participate and provide input. Parents were surveyed and a nomination committee was established. By September of 1983 an executive board of 17 parents was formally initiated as the leaders of Weinberg's parent-teacher organization. It is interesting to note that in 1984-85 the executive board of the PTO had grown to 20 parent members. The organization provides numerous services to our school. Primarily, they:

- are highly visible throughout the day working with/and among the students and staff.
- serve as our chief recruiters of classroom volunteers.
- generate enthusiasm and spirit among students, staff, and parents with the many activities they plan.
- act as our most active, positive public relations directors.
- provide us with an immeasurable amount of help with all facets of the school's programs.

- participate in their child's education because they understand there are many ways to be an involved parent.

As a staff we want to go further. We wanted to make a "real" effort to create a bond between the school and home. Therefore, as one of our theme's activities we implemented an aggressive Home Visitation Program. We believed that home visits designed as informal and personal would help us to create a spirit of caring, communication, and cooperation. Along with that thought it was our contention that a teacher's effectiveness would be maximized when he or she viewed the students in their home environment, meeting their parents, their pets, and exploring their "private" hideaways.

The process is simple. We send a letter home explaining our desire to make informal visits. The parents are given the option of extending an invitation to teachers or graciously declining. Visits are scheduled in the afternoons following student dismissal. Teachers of siblings may choose to meet together and cooperatively schedule their family visits for the same day and same time, and special teachers also make themselves available and often go along on the home visit. Destinations are then recorded in our Home Visitation Log Book.

Our goal was to visit as many homes as possible. We were pleased with the results, in 1983 Weinberg teachers visited the homes of 40 percent of our students.

We found that the individual attention given students on their home territory strengthened teacher-pupil relationships and increased self-esteem in many children. In addition, insights into student behavior patterns had been gained through exposure to home environments. There are indications that school attendance and achievement levels were heightened. The parents' reactions were very positive and their relationship with our school's teachers was greatly enhanced as evidenced by the quantity of good reports received and by the increase in parent involvement. This program significantly helped us achieve a spirit of communication, cooperation, and caring between the home and the school.

The Weinberg management team annually selects a theme that is specific enough to focus on an interesting portion of a child's world. The 1984-85 theme is "Tracing Our Roots and Growing Together". This theme not only emphasizes Social Studies, promotes high academic achievement, encourages school unity and pride, but actively involves our parents. Reports thus far tell us that parents are excited, motivated, and feel very much a part of their child's school life. And it's also interesting to note that our Home Visitation Program is once again a part of the 1984-85 management guide. Because of the tremendous response we received, the team decided that February, the love month, would be designated as Weinberg's Home Visitation Month for the 1984-85 school year. End of the year report: 100 percent of families requesting a Home Visit were honored--67 percent of our students (Casteel, 1984).

HOME VISITS

Sample Letter

Dear Parents,

Our HOME VISITATION PROGRAM was started last year as part of our theme "Getting to Know our Community." We managed to visit over 80 homes and were able to develop closer, caring relationships with our students and their families.

In a desire to continue working towards establishing lasting relationships with our community, the staff has identified the month of February as our Home Visitation Month. During this time we will visit as many of you as possible. For those of you interested in having us come to your homes remember:

1) This visit is informal. We are not there to discuss your child's school progress or behavior.

2) The visits are usually right after school and last from 15-30 minutes.

3) No preparation is required. In fact, our homes need to be vacuumed and all of us are on diets, except Mr. Daniel.

Suggestion: Have your child plan the visit and decide what they want to share with the teacher.

You are all so supportive of our efforts, and demonstrate that consistently by attending our activities. This is our chance to come to you.

Should you return the form below, your child's teacher will contact you. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call 899-5335.

Sincerely,

Camille Casteel,
Principal

- - - -

EDUCATION SUNDAY/PARENT PLEDGE PROGRAM

An Activity for Increasing Parent Support for Education

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Education Sunday is a program to strengthen parent and community support for the public schools and increase and improve the involvement of parents in their children's education. It is a plan to reach parents through the churches or synagogues they attend.

Education Sunday is being planned for San Diego for Sunday, February 9, 1986, and in the South Bay region March 9 and 16, 1986. On those Sundays, school administrators, teachers, and school board members will attend a church and be given the opportunity to make a presentation about schools and ways parents can help their children learn. Parents, grandparents, and others in the congregation will be asked to sign a pledge indicating specific things they will do to help children learn and advance in school.

Follow-up activities will take place at the schools. Parents will be invited to meetings and workshops to learn more about the schools and about how to assist students.

BACKGROUND AND PLANNING

Education Sunday in San Diego County is being coordinated by the County Office of Education Parent Involvement Steering Committee. Several school principals, administrators, parents, and social service organization representatives serve on the committee.

Programs of this kind have been conducted in a number of districts across the country. The Oakland Unified School District held a very successful Education Sunday program last March. It involved over 100 churches and nearly twenty-five thousand pledges were collected from parents. A representative from the Oakland district recently came to San Diego to explain the program to the committee. She discussed the planning and evaluation of the activity and gave the committee samples of the pledges and other material used in the Oakland program.

It has been decided to target schools in the south and east sections of the San Diego City Schools and South Bay area districts for our Education Sunday activities. However, it should be stressed that participation is voluntary, and schools in any area of the district may participate.

If a school decides to become involved, the principal must be willing to make a presentation about public education and his or her school in a church and conduct the follow-up activities in cooperation with the school's PTA or advisory council.

The district's program is being planned by a committee working closely with the County Office of Education. The committee is chaired by Walter Kudumu, a district parent and a member of the County Office of Education Parent Involvement Steering Committee. The group includes principals, representatives from the central office, the Ninth District PTA, the ministerial alliances, the Urban League, and the district's Mexican-American Advisory Committee (San Diego County School Office, 1986).

EDUCATION SUNDAY

TO: Ministers, Priests, and Rabbis
South County Churches and Synagogues

FROM: Gerald A. Rosander
Superintendent of Schools

We need your help. On March 9 and 16, school districts in the South Bay area are sponsoring Education Sunday in cooperation with local churches and synagogues.

The purpose of Education Sunday is to increase parent and community involvement in the educational process.

We are asking church leaders to invite a South County educator to address their congregation on this very important matter. An outstanding speakers' bureau has been assembled for this purpose. The outline of our Education Sunday speech is attached.

Education Sunday will culminate with the signing of a parent and community pledge to improve student achievement (attached). We think you'll agree the pledge targets the kind of support critical to the development of our most important resource--our children.

Education Sunday was a major success with over one hundred churches participating in Oakland last March. It is also being piloted in several Southeast San Diego schools and churches on February 9.

A further goal of Education Sunday is to bring about a closer working relationship between the educational and church communities.

We are flexible and willing to make whatever arrangements are necessary to accommodate Education Sunday to the particular requirements of your worship service. If you wish to deliver the Education Sunday message personally, this is certainly an option. Or you may wish to recommend a member of your congregation as an Education Sunday speaker. Please work with us to make Education Sunday a success.

In order that we may coordinate Education Sunday activities with the South Bay's 153 churches, please return the enclosed postcard with reply by January 31.

Attached are the following:

- Postcard for response
- Parent and Community Pledge (draft)

("Education Sunday," 1986)

EDUCATION SUNDAY

Pastor's Questionnaire and Church Participation Form

Pastor _____

Church _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Time of Sunday Service _____

Size of Congregation _____

Contact Person _____ _____
Name Title

In what way do you wish to have your church participate in Education Sunday? Please check any of the following that apply to you and your congregation.

____ 1. I will actively promote Education Sunday with my congregation, distribute and collect pledges, and conduct any other activities I find appropriate.

____ 2. I would ike an educator/community member to speak to my congregation. (If you have a specific speaker in mind, please submit his/her name.)

Name of desired speaker: _____

_____

Organization/School: _____

_____

____ 3. I have no particular speaker in mind, but I would like to be contacted to arrange for a speaker.

____ 4. I will invite the staff of a local public school to my church on Education Sunday.

____ 5. I am not interested in participating in Education Sunday at this time.

____ 6. Other

If you have checked Item 2 or 3 you will be contacted by a representative from the San Diego City Schools to arrange a preferred time and suggested length for the presentation, how you want the pledges distributed and collected, and to address any other specific organizational concerns you may have.

Education Sunday is an effort to encourage parents and the community to play a more active role in the education of children. Your participation and the participation of your congregation is needed and appreciated.

_____
Signature

EDUCATION SUNDAY

SAN DIEGO COUNTY PARENT/COMMUNITY PLEDGE FOR IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

To encourage learning and success of children in school, as a parent/guardian:

____ I will spend half an hour a day with my child on reading, writing, arithmetic, or just conversation.
____ I will provide a quiet place for my child to study every night (TV, radio, stereo off; no phone calls).
____ I will meet with my child's teacher to discuss my child's needs and performance in school.
____ I will make sure my child gets a good night's sleep.
____ I will see to it that my child is at school on time every day.
____ I will encourage my child to complete his/her homework every day.

as a community member (which includes parents/guardians):

____ I will spend time once a month reading or talking with a child.
____ I will contact my local school and parent support group and become informed about the educational program.
____ I will volunteer my time at the local school.
____ I will contact legislators and other community leaders to support school programs.

Signature _____ Date _____

*Please keep and post in your home.

- -

SAN DIEGO COUNTY PARENT/COMMUNITY PLEDGE FOR IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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as a community member (which includes parents/guardians):

____ I will spend time once a month reading or talking with a child.
____ I will contact my local school and parent support group and become informed about the educational program.
____ I will volunteer my time at the local school.
____ I will contact legislators and other community leaders to support school programs.

(Please Print)
Child's Name _____ School _____ Grade _____
(If applicable)

Your Name _____ Signature _____ Date ____

Address _____ Phone _____

*Turn in this copy.

EDUCATION SUNDAY

To: All Principals
From: Education Sunday Committee Task Force,
Sweetwater Union High School District

Parents are children's first and most important teachers, but few parents receive training for this vital job. Community education can prepare parents to help their children learn. How? There are many approaches that work.. Here are some that have been successful in the Oakland Public Schools:

o Begin by getting real support for parents' involvement--not just lip service--from principals and teachers. Have the superintendent or community education director meet with individual school staffs to ask what kind of parent involvement would help them get better results in their classrooms.

o Using the information from principals and teachers, plan meetings at each school to let parents know how they can contribute to their children's education. To assure good attendance, have students write invitations to their parents, set up "phone trees" to call parents, send home fliers.

o Bring all parents together at the beginning of the meeting to discuss the school's goals. Then have them go to individual classrooms to talk about how they can achieve the goals with their children. Again, have teachers ask the parents for their ideas and record them.

o Have every parent at the meeting make an appointment for a parent/teacher conference where they can learn about their own student's academic strengths and weaknesses.

o Call any parent who did not attend the meeting to set a conference date for them.

o At conference, have teachers give parents specific information on how they can help their own student do better in school.

o Have teachers give parents pledges that commit them to provide a good learning atmosphere at home and to spend 30 minutes a day learning with their children. Ask them to take the pledge home, discuss it with their family, then sign it and send it back to school with their son/daughter.

o To get more pledges returned, offer incentives such as pizza or ice cream for classes that get 100 percent participation.

o Have the principal or designee call parents who signed the pledges to say "thank you" and to answer parents' questions.

o Have teachers send notes and make phone calls to homes about students' achievements and problems. ("Johnnie has been a real asset to the class this week. He could use a little help with his times tables--especially the 9's.")

o Ask teachers to send home weekly folders of student work with a teacher comment and a place for the parent's signature.

o Have the superintendent visit schools constantly to support the parent involvement program and to get feedback on how it's going.

o Offer "parenting" classes.

o Offer "family math" and other similar classes that allow students and parents to learn together.

o Set up "homework centers" where students can work quietly after school. Stock the centers with research materials and have a tutor available to answer questions.

o Hold an "Education Sunday" throughout the city when teachers, the superintendent, and school principals speak to congregations about parent involvement and distribute parent pledges. Ask grandparents, aunts, and uncles to sign pledges, too.

o Set up a Speakers' Bureau so that community education and school staff members can speak to business and community organizations and to the media about parent involvement.

o Prepare "Tips for Parents," publish them in local newspapers and school newsletters and put them into public service announcements for radio and television.

o Hold events and present awards to honor parents who not only help their own students, but who also volunteer in the school and classrooms.

o Publicize the results of increased parent involvement in school newsletters, at school activities, and through the media.

Copies of San Diego County's outline for an Education Sunday speech are available on request from NCEA, as are Spanish versions of the pledges. The proposed speech takes parents and community members through each item on the pledge, explaining its importance in relation to school achievement, and suggesting practical ways to carry it out. Request copies from: National Community Education Association, 119 North Payne Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

("Education Sunday," 1986)

SECTION III

Developing a Plan

for

Parent Involvement

Planning for Parent Involvement

Establishing meaningful partnerships with parents and other citizens in the community is best achieved by schools which plan their parent involvement efforts. The planning process involves four basic steps: analyzing, action-planning, implementing, and evaluation.

Step One: Analyzing

- Survey community attitudes and interests.
- Learn as much as you can about key people, procedures, problems, programs, and policies.
- Determine how parents are currently being involved in your schools.
- Identify new ways parents can be involved.

Step Two: Action-Planning

- Develop a comprehensive parent involvement policy.
- Prepare a parent involvement plan, outlining goals, objectives, and strategies.
- Determine resources needed to supplement the existing channels for parent involvement.
- Analyze and develop new channels. Establish a procedure for using them effectively.
- Get community members involved in the planning.
- Set priorities.

Step Three: Implementation

- Target programs to different audiences, making sure you tailor them to meet different needs.

- Get school staff members involved. Make them aware that parent involvement is a school priority.

- Set timelines and meet them. Make everyone aware of your deadlines and goals so as to work within the parameters you've set.

- Find ways to highlight parent involvement in newsletters, news articles, recognition programs, and other communications avenues.

Step Four: Evaluation

- Listen. What is being said and how are people reacting to your communications efforts?

- Survey. Ask people, through planned means, their opinions and reactions to what you have been doing.

- React to the feedback you obtain. Is it justified? What does it tell you about the effectiveness of your program? How can you use this feedback to improve your program?

- Be honest with yourself. Are you accomplishing your objectives? Are you using your goals to chart your course?

SOURCE: Jean Lowery, Director of Public Relations, Dalton Public Schools, Dalton, Georgia, and the National School Public Relations Association.

(Boren, 1984.)

SELF ASSESSMENT FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Please indicate the degree to which the following characteristics are present in your school or district. Confer with parents or PTA officers in completing this.

	Superior	Good	Average	Fair	Weak	N/A
1. The community as a whole, including business, other institutions, and citizens without children in the school, support the school's goals and activities.						
2. Teachers and principals welcome parents and other community members at the school by being accessible and responsive to them.						
3. Parents in this school show a strong interest in their child's schooling.						
4. Parents work with students at home to support the school's instructional program.						
5. Teachers systematically inform parents of student progress and indicate areas of strength and weakness.						
6. Many teachers use parent/community volunteers in the instructional setting.						
7. Community people, including parents, are invited into the school to give presentations.						
8. The parent organization at this school is considered important by:						
a. the teaching staff						
b. the administration.						
9. Parents and community members are involved in school decisions through advisory and accountability committees.						
10. Community participation at school events is noticeable.						
11. The school encourages students' participation in community activities, such as special celebrations, Scouts, 4-H, volunteers.						

Additional Evidence/Comments

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Arizona's Best Bet, 1983)

ATTACHMENT I

School Name _____

Person Completing Form _____

Checklist for Parental Involvement

DIRECTIONS: ***Please check appropriate box in columns A and D and indicate the number participating in your school in columns B and C.***

A. Does your school participate in the activities listed below?

B. Number of parents participating.

C. Number of teachers participating.

D. Do you need assistance with organizing this activity?

	A		B	C	D	
	Yes	**No**			**Yes**	**No**
1. Parent Surveys	☐	☐	___		☐	☐
2. Teacher Surveys	☐	☐		____	☐	☐
3. Written School-to-Home Communication	☐	☐			☐	☐
a. Newsletters	☐	☐	____		☐	☐
b. Information Packets	☐	☐	____		☐	☐
c. Letters	☐	☐	____		☐	☐
d. Student Newspaper	☐	☐	____		☐	☐
e. Other_____	☐	☐	____		☐	☐
4. Home Visits	☐	☐		____	☐	☐

a. ____ Number of Different Families Visited

b. ____ Average Length of Time per Visit

c. ____ Average Number of Visits per Family

d. ____ Total Visits per Year

	A		B	C	D	
	Yes	No			Yes	No
5. Volunteers-in-School Program	☐	☐		___	☐	☐
a. ___ Total Number of Volunteers Utilized in Classroom						
b. ___ Total Number of Volunteers Utilized out of Classroom						
c. ___ Total Number of Volunteer Hours in Classroom						
d. ___ Total Number of Volunteer Hours out of Classroom						
6. Group Meetings for Parents other than PTA	☐	☐	___		☐	☐
7. Grandparents Day	☐	☐	___		☐	☐
8. Resources for Parents to Check Out (Located in Specific Area at School)	☐	☐	___		☐	☐
9. Lunch at School for Parents	☐	☐	___		☐	☐
10. Slide Presentation Introducing School to New Parents	☐	☐	___		☐	☐
11. After School Parent and Child Together Tutoring Sessions	☐	☐	___		☐	☐
12. Target Family Identification and Activities	☐	☐	___		☐	☐
13. PTA Meetings	☐	☐	___	___	☐	☐
a. Meetings per Year ___						
b. Average Attendance ___						
14. Open House for Parents	☐	☐	___	___	☐	☐
15. Agency Referral for Families	☐	☐	___	___	☐	☐
16. Parent Group Trips	☐	☐	___		☐	☐
17. Inservice on Parent Involvement for Teachers	☐	☐		___	☐	☐
18. Inservice on Parent Involvement for Principals	☐	☐			☐	☐
19. Other (List) _____	☐	☐	___	___	☐	☐

(Community Education Section, 1985)

ATTACHMENT II

Parent Survey

Dear Parent:

_____ School is in the process of developing a Parental Involvement Program. Parents play an important role in the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of their children, especially during the early years. This program will be designed to help children become more successful in school by working with their parents during these more important years. The program emphasis will be to provide training, guidance, and counseling for parents in the area of child growth and development. In order to determine needs of the children in our school, we would appreciate your answering the following questions.

_____
Superintendent or Principal

---

1. What specifically would you like to know about the school?_____
   _____
   _____

2. From what source(s) do you get most of your information about the school?
   - ☐ Newspaper
   - ☐ Children
   - ☐ Teachers, Principal
   - ☐ School Newsletter
   - ☐ Television
   - ☐ Friends
   - ☐ Other _____
     _____

3. Would you be interested in learning about the
   - ☐ testing program in your school
   - ☐ improving your child's self-image
   - ☐ improving your self-image?

4. What specific subjects taught would be of interest to you?
   - ☐ Reading
   - ☐ Math
   - ☐ Art and Music
   - ☐ Other _____ _____

5. Would you be interested in becoming more involved in school affairs and/or school instruction?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Would you be interested in attending a class or session on how parents can help their children at home?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Have you ever:

Yes	No		
☐	☐	a.	Met the principal of your child's school?
☐	☐	b.	Met the teacher(s) of your child's school?
☐	☐	c.	Visited a class (in session) at your child's school?
☐	☐	d.	Attended any school function?
☐	☐	e.	Had lunch with your child at school?
☐	☐	f.	Visited the school for any other reasons?

8. Would you be interested in participating in a small group, coffee-discussion hour at the school?

☐ Yes ☐ No Best Time: ☐ Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ Evening

9. Check the questions below that would help you help your child. Those checked should be ones in which you would be able to participate.

☐ parent-teacher conference
☐ group meetings with a speaker
☐ educational films
☐ meetings to just talk with other parents
☐ sessions about homework, reading, math, etc.

10. I feel that I can talk openly with my child's teacher.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ To Some Degree

I am well informed about what my child is doing at school

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ To Some Degree

I feel that the teacher needs to be aware of home problems that may affect my child's work.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree

11. How effective are the following toward improved communication with your child's teacher and the school?

Open House	☐ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Poor
Evening Grade-Level Orientation Session	☐ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Poor
Teacher-Parent Conferences	☐ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Poor
Parent-Group Session	☐ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Poor

12. As a parent, do you have trouble with: *(Check those that apply)*

☐ your child's homework
☐ discipline
☐ spending enough time with your child
☐ dealing with his/her problems
☐ motivating your child.

13. As a single parent:

Is discipline a problem?

☐ Often ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Is it a problem to transport your child to school-related events?

☐ Often ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Is it difficult to spend time with your child?

☐ Often ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

14. During an average week, do you spend time with your child in the following activities?

Yes	No		
☐	☐	a.	Playing together with them
☐	☐	b.	Reading to them
☐	☐	c.	Just talking (Do not include telling them what to do.)
☐	☐	d.	Watching T.V. together
☐	☐	e.	Helping them with homework

15. Please indicate how interested you are in knowing more about any of these areas: *(If you are interested, circle 1. If somewhat interested, circle 2. If very interested, circle 3.)*

a.	Things to do with my child at home that are fun and educational	1	2	3
b.	Whether my child is developing the way he/she should	1	2	3
c.	How to help my child do better in school	1	2	3
d.	Services provided by the community	1	2	3

Thank you for taking the time to answer these important questions. Your child should return the survey to his/her homeroom teacher by_____.

(Community Education Section, 1985)

ATTACHMENT III

Rate Your School*

The _____ Board of Education would like you to fill out the survey below. The purpose of this survey is to have a sense of pride in what we have accomplished and to make plans to see what we are going to do in the future. We want to know what you think about your school. By doing this we can work toward the kind of school system that we all want to have. The _____ Board of Education cares what you think about the schools you support with your tax dollars. Please have your child return the form to his/her teacher.

PLEASE CHECK ONE	A Excellent	B Good	C Fair	D Poor	F Failure
1. How would you rate your school's overall program?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. How would you rate the school building and grounds?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. How would you rate your child's teachers and the school administration?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. How would you rate your child's total quality of education in our school system?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. How would you rate the discipline in your school?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. What would you list as weaknesses in your school? _____

_____

7. What would you list as the strengths of your school? _____

_____

8. What additional courses or subjects would you like to see taught? _____

_____

9. What building needs do you have in your school? _____

_____

10. Would you favor a strong program concerning alcohol and drug abuse?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*Form developed by Fayette County School System.

(Community Education Section, 1985)

ATTACHMENT IV

Teacher Survey

Name _____ Grade Taught _____

1. What kinds of assistance to parents, parental involvement, school-home interaction or other "parenting" efforts do you believe are most needed in your community?

2. In your work, what are some of the problems that relate to (a) lack of or (b) the wrong kind of parental involvement with children?

3. What kind of help do you believe parents are looking for from your school?

4. In what ways may parents be able to help the classroom teacher with their child's academic success?

5. Write a general goal for a parental involvement program which you might assist in implementing.

(Community Education Section, 1985)

ATTACHMENT V

PARENT INTEREST SURVEY

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

We are asking for your help in order to enrich and enlarge your child's program at school.

Do you have a hobby to share? _____ Please specify. _____

Do you have talent(s) you are willing to share? (cooking, sewing, woodwork, music, art, dramatics, other?) What? _____

Do you have an occupation or an association with a local business or industry of interest to children? _____ If yes, please specify.

_____

_____

Would you be interested in helping with any of the following? If so, please check.

____	telephoning	____	typing	____	bulletin boards
____	making materials to be used in the classroom (tracing kits, arts and crafts, etc.)	____	chaperoning on field trips	____	hostess a home coffee
		____	writing or planning a periodic newsletter	____	clerical work
				____	other (specify)

Do you have some ideas of ways you'd like to become more involved in such a school program? _____

What time would you be able to be with us? Please check.

____	before school	____	noon	____	other
____	morning	____	afternoon	____	after school

What times would you need a babysitter, if at all? _____

Are there others in your family or neighborhood who would be interested in this program? _____ If yes, please specify. _____

(Boren, 1984.)

HOME-SCHOOL
RELATIONS
PLANNER

PREPARED BY JANET CHRISPEELS*

COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

NOVEMBER 1985

* This planner is based on ideas shared by Jack Owens and Jeanne Herrick, Milpitas School District, California.

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS PLANNER

Introduction

Home-school relations is one of the characteristics of an effective school. This planner is designed to help schools assess the current type, level, quantity, and quality of their home-school relations. The term home-school relations is used to convey a larger context than is usually understood by the term parent involvement. The planner presents a continuum of home-school relations all of which need to be addressed if the school is to realize the potential academic and social benefits for students from home-school communications and parent involvement.

The continuum addresses five areas: communications, parents as supporter, parents as learners, parents as teachers, parents as advisors, decision-makers and as advocates for the school.

Why Focus on Home-School Relations?

Home-school relations activities, especially those that focus on communications and home teaching and learning opportunities for students and their parents, have been shown to have positive effects on parents, teachers, and student attitudes and on student achievement in reading. Research shows that both schools and individual teachers can create conditions that facilitate effective communications and involvement by all parents, not just those who naturally become involved. Thus, improved home-school relations can serve as one more strategy that schools can use to raise student achievement. It is a low-cost strategy that can have high payoffs for all involved.

Who Should Use This Planner?

This planner is designed for principals, teachers, and parents, especially those serving on school site councils, school improvement committees, and PTA's. A school wishing to improve its home-school relations may want to establish a special subcommittee to use this planner and develop a plan of action. District administrators concerned with staff development may also find it useful in thinking about needed teacher and administrator in-service.

How Should the Planner Be Used?

By completing the attached worksheets and answering the assessment questions, the planning team will have a good picture of the current status of home-school relations.

Step One:

Complete the blank "Home-School Relations Planning Calendar", listing activities your school currently does each month in each of the categories. In this way, it will be possible to see the gaps or weaknesses.

(A sample of a completed home-school relations planning calendar is included. This is not an exhaustive list of activities, but rather shows types of activities that can be undertaken to support each of the five categories of the continuum. It can also be used as a planning calendar to list the activities in each category that will be done during the school year.)

Step Two:

Answer the questions on the "Home-School Relations Assessment" sheet to obtain some insights on the depth and breadth of activities across the various categories of parent involvement.

Step Three:

Brainstorm with the parent advisory group or school improvement committee for ideas for activities in each of the categories of parent involvement: communication, parents as supporters, parents as learners, parents as teachers, advisory decision-making. Select a couple of ideas for each category that appear most workable. Complete an "Action Plan for Improving Home-School Relations" sheet for each idea.

Step Four:

Present your plans to the school administration and other entities for review and approval, if necessary. Publicize, as appropriate, your plans.

Step Five:

Implement the actions listed in your plan; regularly review the results of the activities; make changes as needed. (Adopted from Chrispeels, 1985.)

SAMPLE

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS PLANNING CALENDAR

Month	Communications	Parents as Supporters	Parents as Learners
SEP	School - send first newsletter - distribute school handbooks - hold curriculum back-school night Teachers - send welcoming letter - send class objectives and homework and discipline policies - host curriculum night - phone calls to parents of students who might be problem learners	Back-to-School Picnic/Movie night PTA membership drives	Parent workshop on how to help with homework
OCT	School - newsletter with calendars - worksheet on how-to calendar - announcements of workshops Teachers - weekly mail packets - notes home on student progress - positive phone calls - class newsletter	Halloween Carnival PTA membership drive Welcome new families Awards assembly	Workshop on parent-teacher conferencing Class observations Dessert with the principal Training of volunteers Make-It-Take-It workshop Hold parent-teacher conferences with challenging students
NOV	School - newsletter, evaluate conference - announcements Teacher - progress reports - weekly mail packets - class newsletter - follow-up on conferences - visit one home	Family movie night fund-raiser Open House Awards assembly Book Fair	Hold parent-teacher conferences for all staff Lunch with the principal Parent workshop on discipline
DEC	School - newsletter survey on home-reading program Teachers - class newsletter - weekly mail - holiday greeting letter - student thank yous for parent volunteers	Holiday Programs Craft-making workshop Holiday tea for teachers and volunteers	Workshop on stress/ nutrition

SAMPLE

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS PLANNING CALENDAR

Month	Parents as Teachers	Advisory/Decision-Making
SEP	Recruit and place volunteers Family friendly homework assignments	Orientation for new council members Establish goals and objectives for year
OCT	Initiate home-reading program Family friendly homework Initiate after school tutoring program	Hold training if necessary Host breakfast with community leaders
NOV	Continue reading program (report progress at Open House) Family friendly homework Tutoring program	Tabulate results of parent-teacher conference survey Review reading program Invite board members to school for tour
DEC	Classroom volunteering Home reading program After school tutoring	Review math program Invite legislators to visit school Tabulate results of reading program

SAMPLE

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS PLANNING CALENDAR

Month	Communications	Parents as Supporters	Parents as Learners
JAN	School - newsletter/mini-survey on discipline policy - bulletin board display of new volunteers Teachers - welcome back letters - class newsletter - positive phone calls - weekly mail	Welcome visits to new families by PTA representatives	Workshops on math Tutoring Class observation invitations Workshop on science tutoring
FEB	School -newsletter Teachers - class newsletter - notes home - weekly mail - phone calls	Family movies "Invite a Teacher to Dinner"	Parent effectiveness training
MAR	School - newsletter: role of hobbies in student development Teachers - class newsletter - notes home - conferences with selected students	Hobby Night	Parent effectiveness workshop series
APR	School - newsletter - booklet on preparing for tests Teachers - class newsletter - progress report - conferences - note of praise	Family movie night Open House Book Fair Science Fair	Workshop on understanding and preparing students for tests
MAY	School - newsletter/mini-survey on school year - summer learning tips Teachers - class newsletter - progress reports - call home	Spring concern or performances Recognition assembly Teacher Appreciation Day Volunteer Tea	Workshop series for 6th-grade parents and students on transition to junior high Orientation sessions for new kindergarten parents Workshop on summer learning opportunities

SAMPLE

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS PLANNING CALENDAR

Month	Parents as Teachers	Advisory/Decision-Making
JAN	Initiate math/science home-learning program Reinitiate volunteer program (train new ones) After school tutoring Continue home reading program	Review of test scores, other bench markets Classroom visits
FEB	Math/science home-learning activities Home reading program After school tutoring Classroom volunteering	Review of homework discipline policies Classroom visits
MAR	Classroom volunteers Math, science home-learning activities After school tutoring program Home reading program	Review of social studies program Tabulate results of newsletter survey Develop recommendations
APR	Classroom volunteering Math, science home-learning activities After school tutoring Home reading program	Review of science program Tabulate results of newsletter survey Develop recommendation
MAY	Classroom volunteering Math, science home-learning activities After school tutoring	Review of year's progress Plan for next year

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS PLANNING CALENDAR

Month	Communications	Parents as Supporters	Parents as Learners
SEP			
OCT			
NOV			
DEC			

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS PLANNING CALENDAR

Month	Parents as Teachers	Advisory/Decision-Making
JAN		
FEB		
MAR		
APR		
MAY		

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS PLANNING CALENDAR

Month	Communications	Parents as Supporters	Parents as Learners
JAN			
FEB			
MAR			
APR			
MAY			

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS PLANNING CALENDAR

Month	Parents as Teachers	Advisory/Decision-Making
JAN		
FEB		
MAR		
APR		
MAY		

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS ASSESSMENT

DIRECTIONS: Having completed the first part of the Home-School Cooperation Program Assessment, use the chart as a basis for answering the following questions related to your parent involvement program.

1. Does your school have an organized parent involvement plan?

2. Does your program have a fairly equal distribution of involvement opportunities across the major categories?

3. Does your program have a fairly equal distribution of passive as well as active opportunites within each role/category?

4. Are parents from each of the major representational groups of your school population involved in your parent involvement program?

5. Is there continuity across grade levels of parent involvement and not just involvement by parents in certain grades?

6. Is training provided parents for any skills/knowledge they need to be successful in the different roles?

7. Is there adequate training and support for teachers?

8. Does the school provide multiple opportunities for two-way communication? (Chrispeels, 1985.)

SAMPLE

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVING HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

Area of Focus: (Check one)

Communications __X__ Parents as Supporters ____ Parents as Learners ____ Parents as Teachers ____

Advisory/Decision-making ____

Activities (or Goals): Improve monthly school newsletter

Evidence of Success: Increased responses on parent response portion of newsletter

What will be Done	Purpose of the Activity	Materials/ Resources Needed	By Whom	When
Each newsletter will include a mini-survey or some type of parent response (usually in the form of a tear-off sheet).	Disseminate parent education information on a regular basis.	access to parent education materials	PR Committee chairperson or community aide or SIP coordinator, etc.	each month
Each newsletter will have a parent education section or article.	Provide opportunity for school to receive parent feedback and information from parents on specific questions. Increases feeling of participation.	survey administration, staff, parents to determine subj. and needs	PR Committee, etc.	each month
Improve graphics in newsletter.	Improve appearance and readability of newsletter.	collect pictures; graphics from computer software and workbooks	Secretary, computer center, aides, parents, students	each month
Distribute newsletters to community groups (nonparent), local newspaper.	Increase community understanding of school program and activities; possibly increase community involvement through this understanding.	transportation postage	Parent Committee who has community contacts and are involved in other organizations; PTA	each month
Each newsletter will include a student corner or feature (something students will want or need to do, such as a puzzle, joke, or game).	Students will want to take newsletter home and be involved with it and aware of it.	children's books and magazines	Staff, parents, students	each month

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ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVING HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

Area of Focus: (Check one)

Communications ____ Parents as Supporters ____ Parents as Learners ____ Parents as Teachers ____

Advisory/Decision-making ____

Activities (or Goals):

Evidence of Success:

What will be Done	Purpose of the Activity	Materials/ Resources Needed	By Whom	When

. . .AND A FINAL NOTE

Perhaps this "tongue in cheek" approach will get the message across.

10 Ways To Make A School Parent-Proof

Some educational wags have been rumored to spend their free time pondering a Utopian-like environment for their schools. It's free from parents and other citizens.

How wonderful everything would be if only they could rid the schools of grieving mothers and fathers, crusading citizens, and chronic visitors.

But these wags always end up crying into their light beers because, they reason, the system and law just won't let them parent-proof their schools.

What they don't realize is that many schools are already parent-proofed. At times, in fact, it seems that we spend much of our time doing our level best to make sure schools are surrounded by impassable moats filled with hungry sharks in the forms of inane regulations, policies, and practices.

Of course, there are many ways to parent-proof a school. Ten high-use methods are listed here. Use them liberally to dampen support for education. . . or turn them around to beat the game and join parents in an enlightening partnership.

Here are ten ways to parent-proof your school.

1. **Hold all meetings, especially board of education meetings, during the day.** Parents are a strange breed. They seem to hold making a living more essential than educational excellence, and usually won't take time off to participate in daytime get-togethers.

2. **Alternate from convulsive to comatose communications.** At the beginning of the year barrage parents with publication after publication, memo after memo and letter after letter. After a short period, parents will grow tired of your communication efforts and start ignoring what you send them. This is the time to cut off communication. If a concern crops up, don't say anything. It probably won't until mid-year anyway, and you'll be too busy with urgent matters to spend time telling people what's important. Tell parents if they're really interested in what's going on to come to your daytime meetings, or wait until next September's communication blitz. After all, being concerned about parents' informational needs takes time and costs money.

3. **Lock the doors, turn off the lights and take the phone off the hook no later than 4:30 in the afternoon.** Make certain parents have absolutely no access to teachers and administrators after normal business hours. (If you do something foolish such as opening a guidance office at night, you'll find parents swooping in like Zeros at Pearl Harbor. Then they'll probably start expecting other services at night too.)

4. **When parents show up at board meetings, try to make them feel as out of place as possible.** Make absolutely certain they don't get their hands on an agenda. And don't ever give them a brochure outlining board procedures. If you do, you'll find they'll start expecting to participate in the "educational process".

5. **Design a report card that reads like a federal regulation.** If parents understand the grading procedure, they'll start demanding unreasonable things such as an explanation for the method used to determine grades. Threaten to have the parents tossed in jail and their child thrown out of school if you don't get the signed report card back within 48 hours. (Never leave any document of interest to parents in their hands longer than 48 hours. They may hire a translator and start asking for explanations.)

6. **Make absolutely certain teachers never introduce themselves to their students' parents until sometime in late October.** Parent-proofing works best if teachers never introduce themselves at all. And, heaven forbid, never allow teachers to call parents on the phone - particularly if a student is doing well in school. Telephone calls should be reserved for discrepancy notices and discipline problems.

7. **Instruct secretaries never to welcome parents when they arrive at the office.** Tell them that parents like to see tax dollars at work and to keep busy typing, filing, and answering phones for at least 15 minutes before acknowledging the presence of a parent. By making parents feel as uncomfortable as possible, they'll keep their visits brief. . . and infrequent.

8. **Post welcoming signs about your doors and offices that say things like "WARNING. . . City Statute 548 requires that all visitors of a public facility shall report immediately upon entering such facility to the officer or director in charge of such building stating reasons for entry and business to be transacted. Violators are subject to a $500 fine or six months in jail or both. Welcome to your school."** Then post absolutely no signs telling visitors how to get to your office. Odds are they'll go away.

9. **During back-to-school night or parent-teacher conferences, insist that parents squeeze into tiny tot furniture.** And be sure no one greets them at the door so they have to wander aimlessly around your school. This will tire them out and make them more docile.

10. **Open all parent meetings by making it perfectly clear that you are infinitely more intelligent than they can ever hope to be.** Use big words. Sit behind a big desk with your chair cranked up high while they sit across from you in low chairs. Look busy and make them understand how lucky they are to be offered a few minutes from your intensely tight schedule.

In case it's not obvious, we don't think any schools should be parent-proof. After all, when you shut out people, you really shut off yourself.

Let people participate. Give your schools and yourself a positive posture -- promote parent partnership!

(The Idea Series, 1979)

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